



**Testimony in Support of H.B. 5033, An Act Addressing the Needs of Food-Insecure Students at Public Institutions of Higher Education**

Dear Chairs Elliott and Slap, Vice Chairs Turco and Flexer, Ranking Members Haines and Witkos, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Aparajita and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for H.B. 5033, an Act addressing the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. This bill would require public institutions of higher education to assess and address food insecurity among students and to increase access to the supplemental nutrition assistance program for eligible students at institutions of higher education.

Black and low-income students are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. A study done by the University of Connecticut estimated that around 35% of Connecticut college students suffer from food insecurities. Amongst these alarming statistics, black students constitute fifty-eight percent, which is 19% higher than the overall rate for students identifying as White or Caucasian. Students experiencing food insecurity have a lower average GPA, and higher rates of depression and nutrition deficiencies.

At least 6 other states have implemented similar legislation with California reporting having helped more than 2.7 million students. Implementation of this bill can significantly change the lives of students across Connecticut as the priority for someone enrolled in university should be their education not their next meal. Existing college food bank programs have helped university students but demand continues to increase. For example, at Middlesex Community College in Middletown, the number of unduplicated students served by the Magic Food Bus, the school's food pantry, increased by 68% during the 2018-19 academic year. We must act now to address this pressing issue of food insecurity amongst college students.

In conclusion, I urge you to address the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. The consequences of food insecurity impact their ability to perform well in and out of school and have a life-long impact on their development and livelihood. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Higher Education Committee so that these individuals have a chance at fulfilling their best potential.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Aparajita Kaphle  
New Haven, CT